

AT A MEETING of the Corporate Parenting Board of HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
held at the Castle, Winchester on Tuesday, 25th September, 2018

Chairman:  
p Councillor Roz Chadd

p Councillor Ann Briggs

p Councillor Malcolm Wade

**Co-opted members**

Dan Busby  
Shannon Nicholls  
p Carla Wright

**28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies were received.

**29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**30. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting dated the 13 July 2018 were agreed.

**31. DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations received.

**32. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman noted that members of the Corporate Parenting Board had recently met with Foster Carers to discuss their role and any feedback they would like to raise. This meeting was considered to be beneficial to the Board's work and the discussion aligned with the feedback received from young people previously. However, it was noted that a wider pool of Foster Carers with a variety of training levels should be consulted in the future.

In a summary of the conversations that took place, the Chairman highlighted the lack of communication and the impact of changing Social Workers as the main issues raised by those present. It was noted that this was not a systemic problem and that an Action Plan would be created to respond to this feedback.

**33. FOSTER CARE RECRUITMENT**

The Board received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of Foster Care Recruitment in Hampshire. The Panel found that those wishing to become Foster Carers must be over 21 years old and poses a spare room and previous childcare experience; this experience can

be personal or professional. The main difficulties in recruiting Foster Carers was financial concerns linked to the cost of caring for a child and the availability of a spare room.

The Board heard that there has been a decline in the number of households approved in line with a decline in interested parties but that this fit the national picture. It was noted that a variety of support is provided for Foster Carers including a buddy system to match with experienced carers and facilitated groups for Foster Carers. This is alongside the Skills payments and training provided alongside ongoing learning and development.

The Board noted that there were 45 Foster Placement moves in the last year, but not all of these could be considered to be disruptive as the figures do include those that have returned to parents, received a Special Guardianship order or returned home. In response to this, work is being undertaken to ensure that carers have the right skills and experience for the child being placed. Having a variety of Foster Carers to select from is essential for the 'matching' process and is therefore a crucial element of Placement Stability.

The Panel received an overview of recent Foster Carer Surveys which recorded Foster Carer's cause of stress and levels of satisfaction with the quantity and quality of support. It was noted that although the responses have improved, the feedback still shows areas that can be improved, and an action plan has been created to drive this change.

In response to questions members heard that;

- A significant issue with the recruitment of Foster Carers is Independent Fostering Agencies who make the market more competitive. Foster Carers from these agencies are also more expensive for Hampshire to use than those recruited and trained by the Local Authority.
- The current policy is that a child is best placed with their family if possible, in line with current legislation.

**Resolved:** That the Corporate Parenting Board note the difficulties, and the work being done to overcome them, of Foster Care Recruitment and the impact of Foster Placement moves.

#### 34. **FOSTER PLACEMENT MOVES**

With the agreement of the Chairman, this item was heard as part of the previous item 'Foster Care Recruitment' in order to more easily facilitate discussion on the issues to be raised.

#### 35. **PLACEMENT COMMISSIONING**

The Board received a presentation from the Director of Children's Services providing an overview of Placement Commissioning in Hampshire. It was noted that the team handles a variety of placement types including overnight respite, out of county placements and post 16 accommodation.

The Board heard that between September 2017 and February 2018; 30% of referrals were made for same day placements and a total of 41% were handled in less than two days.

The key components of the Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) Strategy were highlighted;

- Reduce competition between the Council & IFAs,
- Understand provider costs and improve price transparency,
- Work more closely with a reduced number of providers,
- Share data more openly & effectively.

Underpinning this was a Market Positioning Statement which aims to support IFAs in understanding the Council's needs and considering alignment with their own business plans and strategies.

The Board noted that the number of Children who are Looked After is increasing, as are the number of referrals dealt with by the Placement Commissioning team and alongside this there is a capacity issue Foster Carers and the ability to increase is considered limited. There are additional issues with competition with boarding authorities for the same pool of Foster Carers and increased numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

In response to questions members heard that;

- The amount paid for an IFA placement will be kept under review in order to ensure that there is value for money, but if a child needs to be placed that would be the main priority.

**Resolved:** That the Corporate Parenting Board note the role of the Placement Commissioning Team and their role in securing placements.